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## COMMON SENSE IMPROVEMENT IN FARM HOMES

A radio talk by J. R. Dodge, Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, U. S. Department of Agriculture, broadcast in the National Home Demonstration program etc., Wednesday, April 6, 1938, etc.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

KADDERLY:

There is a man here from our Bureau of Agricultural Engineering who was a very interested listener to those Pennsylvania farm women who a few moments ago carried on the conversation about their experiences and plans in remodeling their homes. From time to time during their conversation I noticed a pleased smile on this man's face. His name is J. R. Dodge -- and he is in charge of farm housing work done by the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering.

Mr. Dodge, perhaps you will tell us what you were thinking .... what caused those smiles.

DODGE:

I didn't realize I was smiling, but if Mr. Kadderly says I was I won't dispute him.....I was, and am, extremely interested to hear how those Pennsylvania women went ahead to make improvements ---- with little outlay in cash.

Many people think that modernization of the farm house means extensive changes or expensive equipment. It is true that sometimes complete remodeling is desirable. But some people can't do this, at least not all at once. They need the money for something else.

Unfortunately many families put off making minor improvements in the hope that they will soon be able to make all of the long-wanted changes at one time. Meanwhile they put up with annoyances that a small cash outlay would eliminate.

So, perhaps I did smile with satisfaction when I heard Mrs. Otto and Mrs. Lutz tell Mrs. Walton how much they had done, with a little money, to make their homes more comfortable.

And as I listened to them I kept thinking of other farm families who have made small changes that brought big returns in convenience. For instance -----a family in Illinois.

This Illinois family had a house with a small sitting room, a parlor, a small dining room and a kitchen on the first floor. The sitting and dining rooms were hardly large enough for ordinary family use, and if there were guests they were actually crowded. The husband and wife decided to remove the partition between the sitting room and dining room. Instead of two small crowded rooms that change gave them one large, light room with two functions. One end is still a dining area but when it is necessary to extend the table to accommodate guests or extra hands the space is no longer limited. After meals are over the entire room can be used to advantage as the dining table is an excellent place for the children to study or for table games.

This change worked so well that they decided their little used parlor could easily be made over into a new bedroom. In other words, it was mostly  
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a matter of changing their minds about the need for a parlor.

I have in mind a Wisconsin family that recently did a complete remodeling job on the farmhouse. Let me give you the picture before they remodelled. The only source of water in this house was a cistern, with the pump located at the kitchen sink. There was no wash room and the men coming in from work had to wash at the sink. A small kitchen full of scrubbing men with a few hungry children thrown in for good measure made it very inconvenient to put the finishing touches on a meal. Also, the laundry work had to be done in this overworked kitchen. The cistern was small and in dry weather the house was without water even from this source. So water had to be carried into the house from the well.

What to do? A water system was decided upon ---- and they went to work. Soil conditions were such that a shower and lavatory could be located in the basement --- and reached through an outside entrance. Laundry trays also were put in the basement.

Result? Well, the men now wash up without entering the kitchen. Wash day congestion was swept out of the kitchen. The days of carrying water from the well are over. And it didn't cost a great deal of money. Just another instance of inexpensive changes that brought about a lightening of work.

I could go on and on like this. These are only a few of hundreds of examples which emphasize that the value of improvements must be measured by the added comfort or better living conditions that they afford, rather than by the extent or cost of the work done. Farmhouses differ from city houses and careful planning is necessary if all of the many activities which go on within the farm house are to be provided for. This is especially true if the money available for improvements is limited.

Mrs. Otto, Mrs. Lutz, Mrs. Walton and Miss Beadle of Pennsylvania indicated how county and home demonstration agents and the State Agricultural colleges are aiding many families in wisely spending their modernizing dollars. We have a Farmers' Bulletin 1749, called "Modernizing Farmhouses" that has been of assistance to many both in planning, and carrying out farm home improvements. Many of the State Colleges of Agriculture have prepared bulletins and even working drawings that will be helpful in planning and executing remodeling jobs in the farm home.

Now, what I have said was designed to bring out three things:

First: Simple repairs, minor changes in room arrangement or even some simple piece of convenience equipment may go far toward converting an uncomfortable or inconvenient house into one in which work is lightened and living is more pleasant.

Second: The United States Department of Agriculture and many State Colleges of Agriculture have prepared bulletins that will assist in planning the remodeling of farm houses.

And Third: The best way to obtain these bulletins is to consult your county agent or home demonstration agent.

KADDERLY:

All very good suggestions, Mr. Dodge -- and made with due regard --- as you said --- to the fact that there are many changes which can be made in the house that do not require an extensive outlay of cash.